



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS EIGHT KC MEN IN COCAINE, MARIJUANA CONSPIRACY

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that eight Kansas City, Mo., men were convicted by a federal jury today for participating in a conspiracy to distribute cocaine and marijuana in the metro area. The case resulted from a reverse sting operation, Graves said, in which an undercover law enforcement officer delivered two kilograms of cocaine and 400 pounds of marijuana to the defendants after they arranged for the “purchase” through a confidential informant.

Augustine C. Aviles, 40, **Michael A. Aviles**, 45, **Carl A. Chatman**, 28, **Henry M. Ruiz**, 39, **Daniel F. Ramirez**, 28, **Kevin C. Darks**, 48, **Joseph Gonzales**, 44, and **Robert Lopez**, 28, all of Kansas City, were found guilty of charges contained in a July 13, 2004 indictment at the conclusion of a trial that began Sept. 21, 2004.

Following the presentation of evidence, jurors deliberated for about 12 hours before returning a guilty verdict to U.S. District Judge Ortrie D. Smith this afternoon.

According to Graves, **Augustine Aviles** believed he was buying \$180,000 worth of cocaine and marijuana that had been shipped from Mexico. After negotiating with a confidential informant, **Augustine Aviles** organized the other co-defendants – family members and friends from his neighborhood – to assist in purchasing and distributing the narcotics.

“Their downfall was their own greed,” Graves said. “The defendants thought they had found a new pipeline for drugs from Mexico, a way to boost their profits by getting cocaine and marijuana at a cheaper price by cutting out the middle man. They didn’t realize their new supplier was part of a law enforcement sting operation.”

The defendants waited at a warehouse until a truck, driven by an undercover law enforcement officer, arrived to deliver the cocaine and marijuana. After the defendants unloaded

the truck, Graves said, they were arrested.

“They arrived at the warehouse armed and willing to fight, and met law enforcement officers with guns drawn,” Graves said. “Fortunately, thanks to the element of surprise and the professional tactics of a seasoned force of officers, there were no serious injuries. Their neighborhood is safer with these men off the streets.”

Each of the eight defendants was found guilty of participating in a conspiracy to distribute illegal narcotics, as well as being in possession with the intent to distribute marijuana. **Augustine Aviles, Michael Aviles, Chatman, Ruiz, Darks and Gonzales** were found guilty of being in possession with the intent to distribute cocaine.

Each of the defendants was also found guilty of being in possession of one or more firearms during and in relation to a drug trafficking crime. And each defendant was convicted on the forfeiture count, which requires them to forfeit to the government \$13,400 that was paid to the confidential informant, for which they are jointly and severally liable.

Under federal statutes, **Augustine Aviles, Michael Aviles, Chatman, Darks, Ramirez and Lopez** could be subject to a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in federal prison without parole, plus a fine up to \$6,250,000. **Ruiz and Gonzales** could be subject to a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years in federal prison without parole due to their record of past criminal felony convictions, plus a fine up to \$6,250,000. Sentencing hearings will be scheduled after the completion of presentence investigations by the United States Probation Office.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney David M. Ketchmark and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew Wolesky. It was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow